

SYZYGY

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Word buffs have long known that a remarkable several-syllable word written without any of the five basic vowels (A, E, I, O, U) is the word SYZYGY. No one knows why this particular word should have been singled out for attention. It certainly is not the longest such word: longer examples include, but are not limited to, GYPSY-FY, GYPSYRY, and SYMPHYSY. Yet, the fact remains that no one ever heard of these longer words, but everyone knows about SYZYGY.

That is very peculiar, when you stop to think about it. While everyone knows about SYZYGY, almost no one knows what it means. What is even more astonishing is the fact that the word SYZYGY has a fantastic number of meanings, very few of which can be found by looking it up in one particular dictionary, no matter how large or authoritative that dictionary happens to be.

To supply an obvious need and to remedy a defect of long standing, we have assembled 28 of the most interesting meanings of the word SYZYGY. These meanings have been extracted from a variety of dictionaries in standard use. The meanings are given below, classified according to subject area. If you are one of the many logologists fond of brandishing the word SYZYGY, it now behooves you to memorize all 28 of these meanings, so that you are prepared if anyone on whom you foist the word retallates by asking you what the devil SYZYGY means.

Nontechnical language

1. A pair or couple of things, alike, opposite, connected, correlated, or otherwise related.
2. A joining or conjunction of two things.

Gnosticism or Gnostic theology

3. A couple or pair of opposites, or of aeons male or female, as Anthropos (Man) and Ecclesia (the Church).

Algebra

4. Any linear function of a set of variables.
5. A linear equation between fundamental covariants of a quantic.
6. A group of rational integral functions so related that, on their being severally multiplied by other rational integral functions,

the sum of the products vanishes identically.

7. The relation between such rational integral functions.
8. A relation $S(I_1, \dots, I_m) = 0$ between the fundamental concomitants of one or more binary forms, where S is a polynomial with numerical coefficients.

Anatomy

9. The pairs of cranial nerves carrying messages from the brain to the rest of the body (used in the plural).

Zoology

10. The conjunction of two organs or organisms by close adhesion and partial concrescence, without loss of their identity.
11. The things so formed, or the resulting conformation.
12. An animal microorganism supposed to be formed by the fusion of several larval parasites.
13. Zygonis or conjugation in various protozoans and other low organisms.
14. The intimately united and apparently fused condition of certain low organisms during conjugation.
15. Temporary end-to-end union of the sporonts of certain protozoans such as gregarines, adhering in strings.
16. The suture or immovable union of two usually adjacent joints of a crinoid ray or arm to form a single joint, or the joints thus sutured, with partial obliteration of the line of union.

Astronomy

17. The period of the new or the full moon.
18. The nearly straight-line configuration of three celestial bodies (as the sun, moon, and earth during a lunar or solar eclipse) in a gravitational system.
19. The conjunction or opposition of a planet with the sun.
20. The conjunction or opposition of any two heavenly bodies.
21. A point in the orbit of a body, as the moon, at which it is in conjunction with or in opposition to the sun.
22. The point at which any such conjunction or opposition takes place.

Ancient Greek and Latin prosody

23. A group or combination of two feet of the same kind in one meter.
24. A group or combination of two feet of different kinds in one meter.
25. A tetrasyllabic foot, consisting of four syllables, regarded as composed of two dissyllabic feet.
26. A measure applied to Ionic lines -- single Ionics regarded as combinations of trochees and pyrrhics.
27. A compound foot of five or six syllables.
28. An epiirrhematic syzygy, or the last four parts of the parabasis: the strophe or ode, the epiirrhema, the antistrophe or antode, and the antepirrhema; the parts of the parabasis.